

# Food Safety for Pregnant Women, Infants & Children

## Why Is Food Safety

**Important?** Food safety is important at all times and even more during pregnancy. While a woman is pregnant, her immune system does not protect her against illness as well as it does when she's not pregnant. This means that there is a greater chance for her and her baby to become ill from a foodborne illness. Infants and children also have a higher risk of getting a foodborne illness because their immune systems are just starting to get strong.

## What Is a Foodborne

**Illness?** A foodborne illness is a sickness that occurs when people eat foods or drink liquids that contain harmful microorganisms (parasites, viruses or pathogens) or chemical contaminants. A foodborne illness is often referred to as "food poisoning".



**Listeria** is a bacteria that is commonly found in refrigerated ready-to-eat foods (poultry, meat, seafood and unpasteurized dairy products) and soil. It can also be found in processed or packaged foods. Listeria grows well in refrigerator temperatures and if eaten, can lead to listeriosis. Though it's possible for a pregnant mother to experience symptoms of listeriosis, the majority of the time she will not. It is still possible for her to pass the infection to her baby even though she may not feel sick. A pregnant mom is 20 times more likely to get listeriosis than any other adult.

Listeriosis symptoms in the mother:

- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Diarrhea or upset stomach
- Loss of balance
- Confusion

Listeriosis effects on the baby:

- Can lead to premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Paralysis
- Seizures
- Blindness
- Damage to certain organs
- Death

**Toxoplasmosis** is caused by eating or drinking a parasite that is found in raw and undercooked meat, fruits and veggies that are not washed, soil, contaminated water, dirty cat litter boxes and other places cat feces can be found. The person affected may or may not have any symptoms.

Toxoplasmosis symptoms in the mother:

- Swollen glands
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Stiff neck

Toxoplasmosis effects on the baby:

- Hearing loss
- Blindness
- Retardation
- Brain & eye problems years after birth
- Death

## Food Safety, Continued

**Methylmercury** is a metal that is found in most fish but only certain fish contain high enough amounts to become dangerous. Methylmercury can build up in the blood stream and can pass from mother to baby. Often the mother will not have any physical symptoms, while the newborn baby may have damage to its nervous system.

### Foods That Could Harm Women, Infants & Children

Women	Infants	Children	Potential Harmful Foods
■			Raw fish or shellfish, including oysters, mussels, scallops & clams
■	■	■	Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, fish & eggs
■			Refrigerated smoked seafood (unless it's an ingredient in a cooked dish)
■			Refrigerated pâté or meat spreads
■	■	■	Raw sprouts (clover, alfalfa and radish) (& bean for infants & children)
■	■	■	Unpasteurized milk or foods containing unpasteurized milk
■	■	■	Unpasteurized fruit or vegetable juices
■	■	■	Soft cheeses such as Brie, feta, Camembert, blue-veined cheeses & Mexican-cheese such as queso blanco, queso fresco or Panela unless labeled as made with pasteurized milk
■	■	■	Hot dogs, luncheon meats (cold cuts), fermented & dry sausage & other deli-style meat or poultry products unless reheated until STEAMING hot
	■	■	Undercooked or raw tofu
	■		Honey (on a pacifier, added to liquids or solid foods, used in cooking or part of processed foods)